



COLORECTAL CANCER EARLY DETECTION

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer-related death in the nation. In 2003, about 57,100 Americans will die from colorectal cancer and approximately 147,500 new cases will be diagnosed.
- Survival is greatly enhanced when this cancer is detected and treated early, yet only 37% of colorectal cancer cases are diagnosed at an early, localized stage.
- Screening for colorectal cancer can help prevent the disease by identifying precancerous polyps that can be removed before cancer develops. Unfortunately, these effective screening tests are underused.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC supports and promotes national colorectal cancer screening by educating health care providers and the public about the benefits of screening, the availability of screening procedures, and screening guidelines. With this goal in mind, CDC educates Americans aged 50 years or older about the importance of regular colorectal cancer screening with its national colorectal cancer action campaign, Screen for Life. To raise primary care providers' awareness and knowledge about the prevention and early detection of colorectal cancer, CDC has developed an online training program, *A Call To Action* (www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorctl/calltoaction/index.htm).

CDC supports epidemiological, behavioral science, and surveillance research efforts to expand the knowledge base, gather and analyze data, and fund prevention and intervention research projects and investigations related to colorectal cancer. CDC also works with various national partners like the American Cancer Society to support efforts that inform and educate multiple audiences about the importance of colorectal cancer screening.

Example of programs in action: Recent evidence indicates that screening reduces death rates from colorectal cancer. With support from CDC through a state cancer control plan, North Carolina has launched a colorectal cancer control initiative – to increase awareness about the need for and importance of screening, to conduct colorectal cancer screening in local health departments across the state, and to train health professionals to perform flexible sigmoidoscopy, the screening test for colorectal cancer.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC will promote colorectal cancer screening campaigns nationwide by educating health care providers and the public about current screening guidelines and the benefits of screening. CDC will support prevention and intervention research to find ways to improve colorectal cancer screening rates and answer questions related to clinical infrastructure, methods, frequency and best practices for screening. CDC will enhance colorectal cancer reporting for racial and ethnic minorities and use registries to assess the quality of care received by people diagnosed with this disease.